<u>IN THE CLAIMS</u>

Please cancel claims 6 and 20 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please amend claims 2 and 7 as indicated below.

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

<u>Listing of Claims:</u>

Claim 1 (cancelled)

Claim 2 (currently amended) ~~The method as recited in claim 20 further comprising the steps of:~~ A method for reducing the number of messages to be processed by a control processor in a load balancer comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to establish a TCP connection from a client by a network processor in said load balancer;

establishing said TCP connection with said client via handshake messages between said network processor and said client;

receiving a request message from said client;

bundling said request message and information from said handshake messages involved in establishing said TCP connection by said network processor;

transmitting said bundled message to said control processor by said network;

identifying a server in a server farm to service said client's request message by said control processor;

bundling said client's request message and a control message by said control processor; ~~and~~

transmitting said bundled message comprising said client's request message and said control message to said network processor;

receiving a request to terminate said TCP connection from said server by said network processor;

facilitating said termination of said connection between said server and said client;

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bundling information regarding a series of closed connections by said network processor, wherein said bundling information occurs after a particular number of connections have been closed; and

transmitting said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections to said control processor by said network processor.

Claim 3 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said server in said server farm is identified using information extracted from said client's request message.

Claim 4 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information used to enable said network processor to create entries in a forwarding table to ensure packets from said client are transmitted to said server and to ensure packets from said server are transmitted to said client.

Claim 5 (original) The method as recited in claim 2, wherein said control message comprises information to establish a TCP connection between said load balancer and said server.

Claim 6 (cancelled)

Claim 7 (currently amended) The method as recited in claim [[6]] 2 further comprising the step of:

extracting information from said bundled message regarding said series of closed connections by said control processor.

Claims 8-20 (cancelled)